



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Drug Overdose Monthly Report

Fatal Unintentional Drug Overdose Report

Key Findings of Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 – December 2020

- Current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases through December 2020. Period of analysis includes January 2019 through November 2020. Statistics may change as confirmation of cases occurs periodically.
- For the period of January to middle of December 2020, there were 1259 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 276 pending cases waiting for toxicology confirmation. The percentage of fentanyl-involved drug overdose deaths continues to be high in 2020.
- In 2019, there were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose related deaths.
- **New and emerging substances:** Lethal combinations of xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, with fentanyl were identified in 2019. The same combination trends for 2020 drug overdose deaths. In 2020, new emerging substances, Flualprazolam, a designer benzodiazepine, in combination with fentanyl resulted in 9 overdose deaths and Eutylone, a synthetic stimulant, resulted in 3 overdose deaths. Carfentanil, a fentanyl analog which is 100 times stronger than fentanyl, was present in 2 overdose deaths in 2020. Prior to 2020, carfentanil was seen in 9 overdose deaths in 2017 in Connecticut.

Comparative Overview of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths (January 2019 – December 2020)

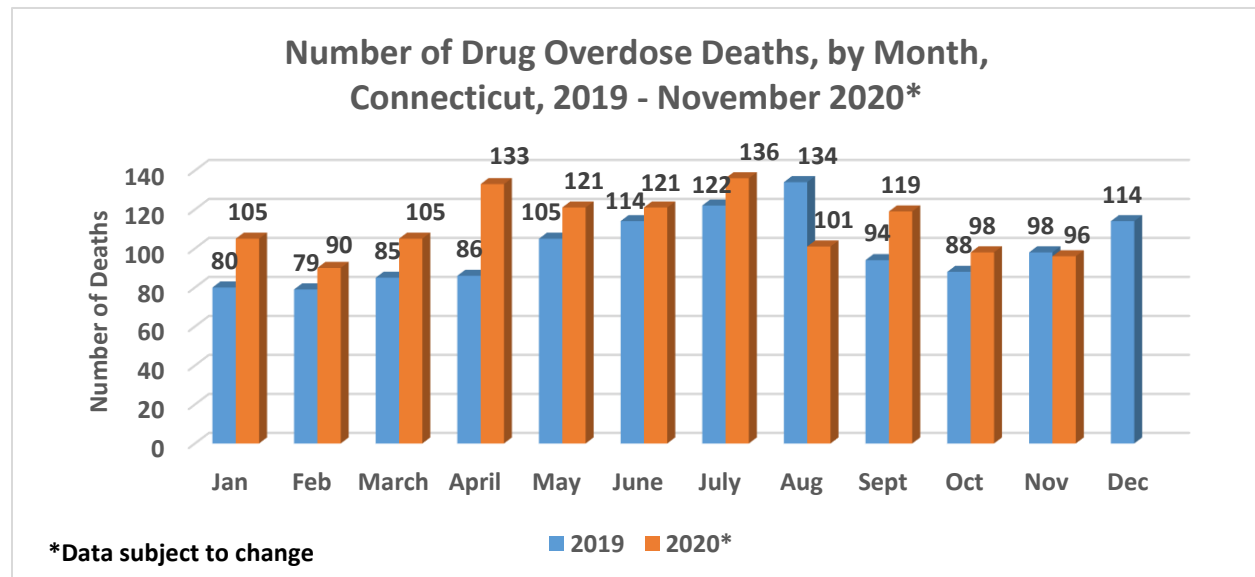
January 1 – December 2020	2019
There were 1259 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 276 cases still pending mostly from December. There was a 12.9% increase in drug overdose deaths by November 2020, compared to the same time period in 2019.	There were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2019, with an increase of 18% compared to 2018.
The lethal combination of xylazine and fentanyl continues to be a problem in 2020. There were 127 deaths with xylazine and fentanyl combined. The median number of xylazine-involved deaths was 10.	For the first time in 2019, xylazine/fentanyl combinations were involved in 70 drug overdose deaths. The median number for xylazine-involved deaths was 7.
Fentanyl continues to be a problem in 2020. The average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was at 85.4% as of December 2020.	On average, fentanyl and/or fentanyl analogs were involved in 82% of the overdose deaths in 2019.
Updated on 1-10-2021; Data Source: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), Connecticut	

For substance use disorder information visit: <https://www.drugfreect.org>.

For information on the CT DPH Opioids and Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program in the Office of Injury and Violence Prevention, visit: <https://www.ct.gov/dph/injuryprevention>

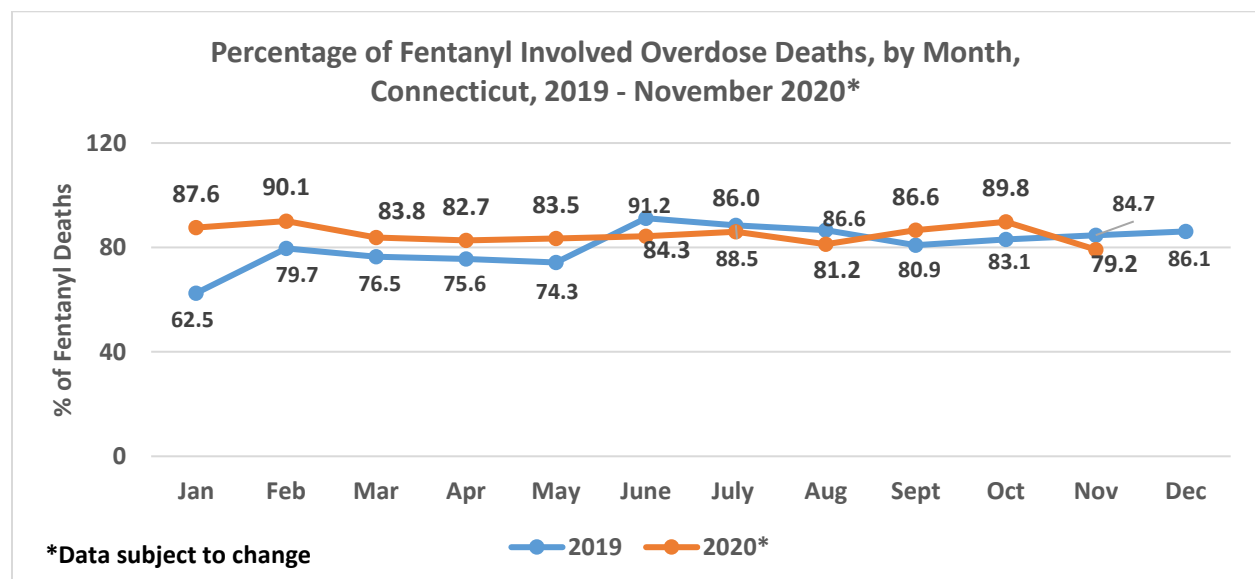
Unintentional drug overdose deaths, by month, Connecticut, 2019 – November 2020

2020: There was a 12.9% increase in unintentional drug overdose deaths as of November 2020 in Connecticut, when compared to the same time frame of January to November of 2019. November 2020 numbers may increase as there are 59 cases pending waiting for toxicology confirmation. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths.

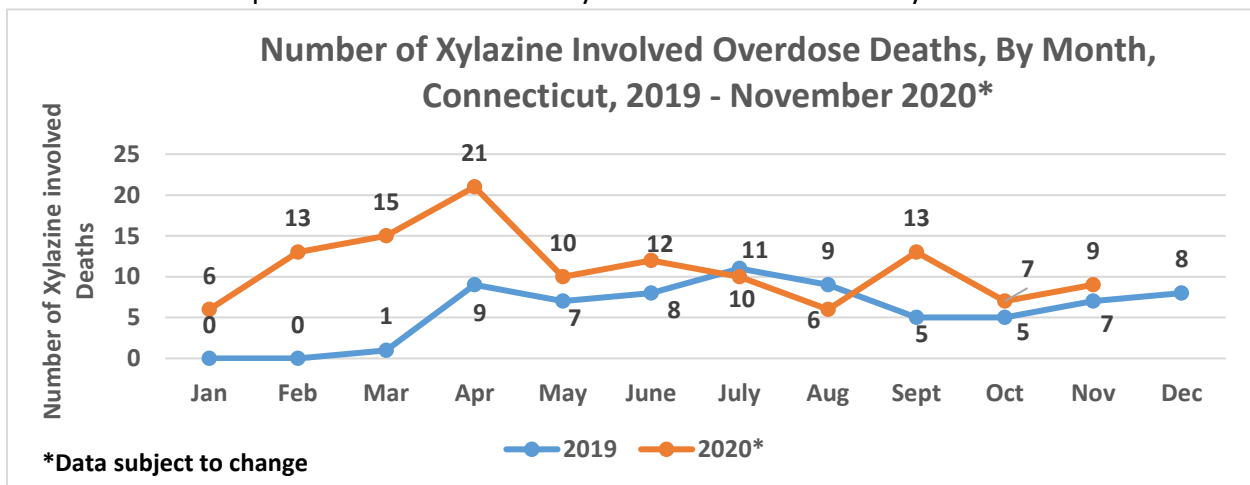


The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continues to be a problem

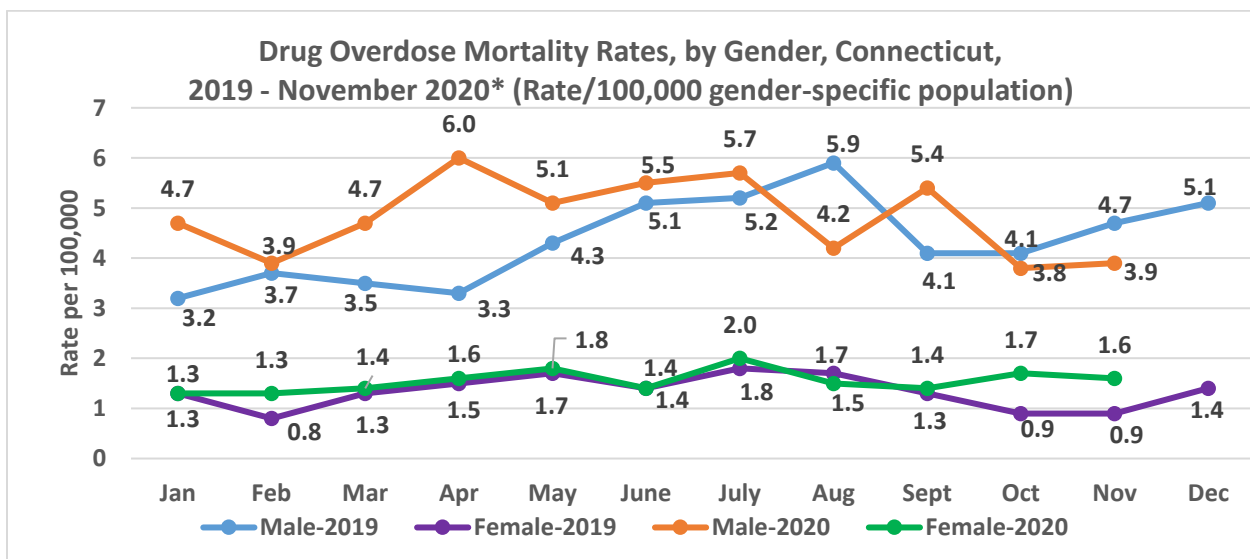
in 2020: Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. As of December 2020 (December data not shown as there are 182 pending cases), the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was 85.4%. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths by month.



Xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer, identified as an emerging novel substance in drug intoxication deaths in Connecticut since 2019 – November 2020: To enhance drug effects, recreational drugs are often adulterated with other pharmacological agents such as xylazine, a veterinary sedative not intended for human use. In Connecticut, in March 2019, xylazine was identified as a novel and emerging adulterant in fatal drug intoxications when combined with fentanyl; it continues to be a problem in 2020. In 2019, there were 70 xylazine-involved deaths, and as of the middle of November 2020, there have been 127 confirmed cases. Except for one (xylazine + cocaine), all xylazine-involved deaths were combined with fentanyl. The below chart represents the number of xylazine-involved deaths by month.

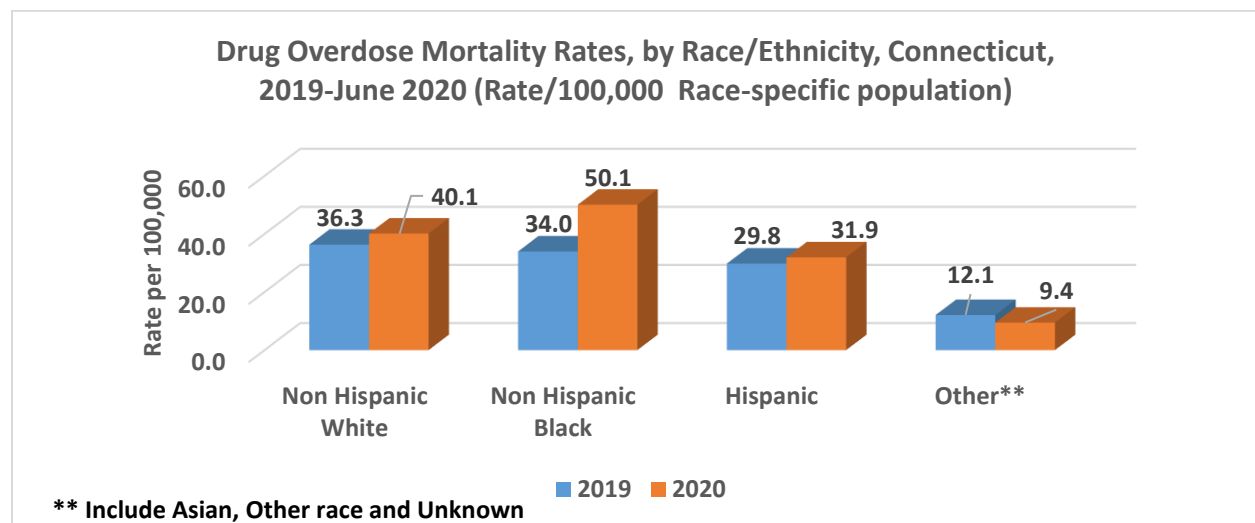


Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females in 2019 – November 2020: Rates of unintentional drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The line graph below represents rates of unintentional drug overdose death by gender (rate per 100,000 gender-specific population) for this time period.



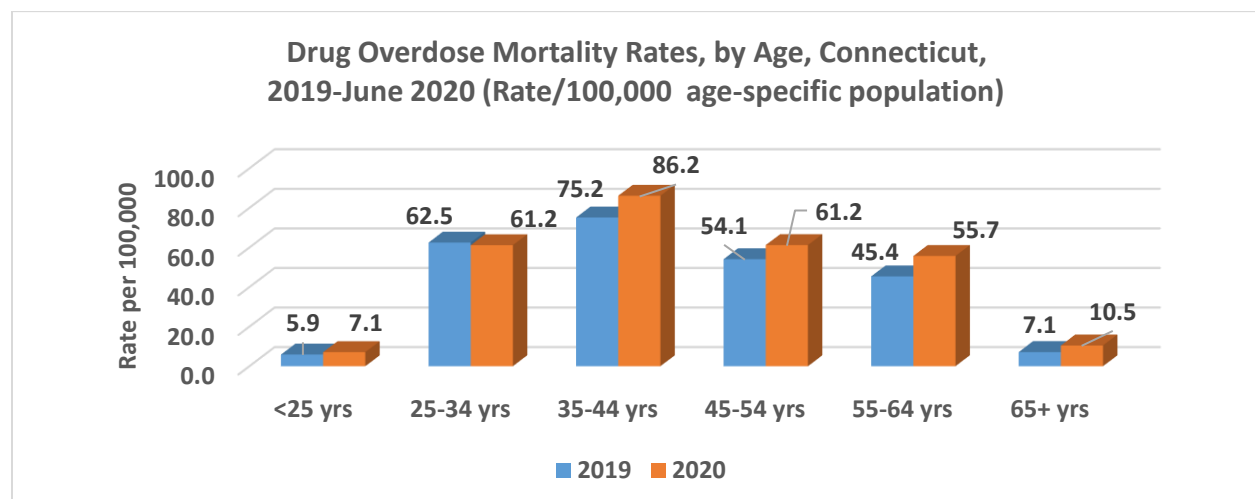
Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020:

Drug overdose death rates were highest among non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population during 2019 and 2020. However, in 2020, the drug overdose mortality rate substantially increased in the non-Hispanic Black population compared to the previous year. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for year 2019 and the first half of 2020 (January – June). Rates through June are final for first half of 2020 as there are no pending cases for this time period.



Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35-44 year old age group in

Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020: Drug overdose death rates were highest among the 35-44 age group. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age, by year. Rates through June are final for first half of 2020 as there are no pending cases for this time period.



Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by County, 2019 – June 2020: The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by county, by year. During this period New Haven County (44.2) had the highest rate followed by Litchfield County (39.9), Middlesex County (39.4), Hartford County (39.2) and New London County (39.2). In 2020, New Haven, followed by Middlesex counties were most affected when compared to 2019. Windham County has seen a decrease in overdose death rate in 2020.

